



# Department of Conservation

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[www.mdc.mo.gov](http://www.mdc.mo.gov)

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), authorized in 1937 by an initiative process and statewide vote to amend the Missouri Constitution, was created by public demand for better management of the state's fish, forest, and wildlife resources. The department is headed by the Conservation Commission, whose four members, no more than two of whom may belong to the same political party, are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. They serve with no compensation for staggered six-year terms.

The department's principal sources of revenue are receipts from the sale of hunting and fishing permits and the one-eighth of one percent conservation sales tax. The conservation sales tax was approved as a constitutional amendment through a citizen initiative process and statewide vote in 1976. Funds are also received, primarily on a matching basis, from federal aid provisions of the Wildlife Restoration, Sport Fish Restoration and Cooperative Forestry Assistance Acts. The department receives no state general revenue funds.

The department's mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state; to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management activities; and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources. The mission is accomplished using a set of belief statements which include: excellent public service is what we will provide; all citizens are important and we value their trust and their point of view; Missourians are our partners to achieve conservation success; employees are the department's most important resource; and fairness, objectivity, sound science, integrity and accountability will guide our actions.

## Conservation Commission

**Bedell, Don C.**, (R), Sikeston, July 1, 2015;  
**Blair, James T. IV**, (R), St. Louis, July 1, 2017;  
**Johnson, Don R.**, (D), Festus, July 1, 2013;  
**Plattner, Becky L.**, (D), Grand Pass, July 1, 2013.

## Director's Office

The Conservation Commission appoints the department director who, along with two deputy directors, directs programs and activities through the divisions of administrative services, design and development, fisheries, forestry, human resources, outreach and education, private land services, protection, resource science and wildlife. In addition to division assignments, the deputy directors provide leadership for projects and initiatives assigned by the director, federal aid coordination, partnerships and a policy coordination unit, which provides intra- and inter-agency coordination in the areas of environmental and resource management policy, river basin coordination, multi-resource issues, strategic coordination and public involvement. The director also supervises the general counsel, internal auditor and an assistant to the director for governmental relations.

## General Counsel

The general counsel is appointed by the director of the Department of Conservation, with the consent of the Conservation Commission, to provide legal advice and representation



DON C. BEDELL  
Member  
Conservation Commission



JAMES T. BLAIR IV  
Member  
Conservation Commission



DON R. JOHNSON  
Member  
Conservation Commission



BECKY L. PLATTNER  
Member  
Conservation Commission

to the commission and the department. The Office of General Counsel handles litigation, works with prosecutors and staff to enforce statutes and regulations, provides legal advice and opinions, drafts and reviews documents, oversees real estate transactions and reviews administrative regulations.

## Internal Auditor

The internal auditor assists the commission and director by independently analyzing department operations, policies, procedures, records and compliance with laws and regulations to ensure effectiveness and accountability. The internal audit function also serves the Department of Conservation as custodian of records and hearing officer for revocation of hunting and fishing privileges.

## Regional Offices

The department has two administrative units and eight regions. The Missouri River Unit includes the Central, Kansas City, Northeast, and Northwest regions. The Ozark Unit includes Ozark, St. Louis, Southeast, and Southwest regions. A regional service center in each region, in addition to other offices, nature centers, staffed shooting ranges, and interpretive centers, provides close-to-home opportunities for Missourians to participate in conservation programs and services. Regional offices are located in Columbia, Lee's Summit, St. Joseph, Kirksville, West Plains, St. Charles, Cape Girardeau, and Springfield.

## Administrative Services Division

The administrative services division provides administrative support through two sections responsible for information technology and financial services and five units responsible for fleet services, flight services, general services, permit services and purchasing.

The information technology section provides strategic direction for the department's information technology assets. It is responsible for managing, maintaining and supporting the use of those assets, which includes all computer hardware and software systems, telephone systems two-way radio and other telecommunications systems, and the coordination of those



BOB ZIEHMER  
Director



TOM DRAPER  
Deputy Director



TIM D. RIPPERGER  
Deputy Director



AARON JEFFRIES  
Assistant to Director



RHONDA MAPLES  
Executive Assistant to the  
Director / Commission  
Secretary



TRACY MCGINNIS  
General Counsel



NANCY DUBBERT  
Internal Auditor



CARTER CAMPBELL  
Administrative Services  
Division Chief



JACOB CAREAGA  
Design and Development  
Division Chief



CHRIS VITELLO  
Fisheries Division Chief

systems with other state agencies. It is also responsible for developing technology solutions to meet business needs.

The financial services section administers all financial activities of the department. It maintains liaison with the State treasurer, state auditor, Office of Administration, and Department of Revenue. It is responsible for revenue collection, accounts payable, accounting, budget and payroll. Revenue from the conservation sales tax, hunting and fishing permits, federal reimbursement, timber sales, publications and surplus property is received and deposited in the state treasury for department programs.

The other units are responsible for: management, operation and purchasing of the department's fleet; management of aircraft operations; inventory control; repair and disposition of vehicles, marine and other mechanical equipment; operation of a distribution center and warehouse for publications, products and media loan services; operation of printing, mailing and sign production services; the distribution of hunting and fishing permits statewide for sale to the public; and purchasing services.

## Design and Development Division

The design and development division provides engineering, architecture, land surveying, construction, quality control and facility maintenance services to develop, maintain and manage the department's infrastructure and to implement and administer capital improvement projects.

Infrastructure and capital improvement projects include boat accesses, docks, roads, parking areas, office and storage buildings, fish hatcheries, fishing lakes and ponds, nature centers, shooting ranges, trails, wetlands and other projects. The division provides engineering and architectural designs that apply sound engineering principles to the design of conservation projects and public use facilities that are in harmony with the environment and to enhance the enjoyment of Missouri's natural resources. The division provides land surveying; ongoing renovation, repair and maintenance; and facility maintenance, including grounds maintenance, grading of parking areas and entry roads, cleaning boat ramps and maintenance of privies, boat docks and other infrastructure.

The division also administers the department's County Aid Road Trust Fund (CART) program that assists county and other

governmental units with road maintenance to ensure public access is available to department areas.

## Fisheries Division

The fisheries division provides fisheries and aquatic resource expertise and management efforts. Responsibilities include four warm water and five cold water hatcheries; administering a Stream Unit program which includes over 3,600 active "Stream Team" citizen groups; monitoring and maintaining the quality of Missouri's aquatic resources; managing public fisheries resources for quality fishing; providing technical stream and lake management advice to private landowners and other public agencies; and providing and assisting with public information and education programs.

The four warm water hatcheries rear and coordinate the stocking of about eight million fish in public waters, suitable private lakes and waters used for special fishing events and aquatic resources education. Methods are also developed for rearing of endangered species. The five cold water hatcheries (Bennett Spring, Maramec Spring, Montauk, Roaring River, and Shepherd of the Hills) rear and coordinate the stocking of about two million trout in public waters.

The division directs and administers fisheries programs, develops and refines regulations, works on the acquisition and development of public fishing and boat access areas, administers the Community Assistance Program and Corporate and Agency Partnership Program, administers Federal Aid grants, coordinates angler recognition programs, develops and revises technical and popular written materials and distributes a weekly fishing report during the fishing season.

Missouri has about 1,163,000 surface acres of water comprised of nearly 900 public lakes, 486 miles of the Mississippi River and 553 miles of the Missouri River, almost 16,000 miles of other permanent streams, over 39,000 miles of intermittent streams and about 500,000 private lakes. These waters support rich and diverse aquatic communities that are used, enjoyed and appreciated by millions of people each year. Fishing is one of the most popular and economically important uses of these waters. Each year, 1.1 million anglers in Missouri generate more than \$2.1 billion of economic impact in the state.

## Forestry Division

The forestry division provides management and protection of the state's forest resources to have healthy and sustainable forest and woodland communities on both public and private land. Forestry programs assist forest landowners and forest industries with practices designed to: ensure healthy and sustainable forests; ensure the proper management and sustainability of public forest lands; control and reduce impacts from major infestations of forest insects and diseases; work with communities to develop sustainable community forestry programs; and improve rural fire protection throughout the state.

Each year, technical assistance is provided by the division to private woodland owners. These services are available statewide and include tree selection and planting advice, forest management plans and recommendations, forest products utilization and marketing assistance and wildlife management recommendations. The forest health protection program ensures the continuing health of the forest resources through survey and detection, pest and control evaluations and public information. The division also provides training for loggers to encourage the sustainable harvest of Missouri's forests.

The division manages over 600,000 acres. Forest management benefits include biodiversity, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, forest products and recreational opportunities. To encourage forest and wildlife plantings, four to six million seedlings of 70 different tree and shrub species are produced at the George O. White State Forest Nursery each year to fill requests from Missourians. Every fourth grade student in the state receives an Arbor Day seedling produced at the nursery.

The division provides assistance to communities through the Tree Resource Improvement and Management (T.R.I.M.) program, which provides funds to implement community forestry programs, including tree establishment, maintenance and care. Special consideration has been given to communities that have sustained significant damage from natural disasters and invasive pests.

In addition, the division assists over 800 volunteer rural fire departments annually to suppress approximately 3,000 wildfires, which burn 60,000 acres of forest and grassland. Technical assistance, training and federal excess equipment are available at no cost to cooperating rural fire departments. Grants, in part supported by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), are available to rural fire departments on a competitive basis. A rural forest fire equipment center is located in Lebanon. The center acquires and distributes federal excess property to rural fire departments for use in fire suppression activities. "Operation Forest Arson" is a program to combat the high number of arson-caused wildfires. This program is combined with the Smokey Bear wildfire prevention campaign to educate school children.

In Missouri, there are about 14.6 million acres of forests, or 33 percent of the land area. Approximately 75 percent of the forested land is the oak-hickory type, five percent is shortleaf pine and oak-pine types and the remainder is in cedar and bottomland hardwoods. Over 80 percent of forests are privately owned by about 200,000 individual owners. Missouri's forests support a large forest products industry with about 1,000 manufacturing plants producing lumber, railroad ties, cooperage, cedar and walnut items (including gunstocks and veneer), charcoal and other products. Missouri leads the nation in the production of charcoal, cooperage barrels, cedar novelties, gunstocks, walnut bowls and walnut nutmeats. The economic impact of the forest industry and wood products in Missouri is \$5.7 billion annually.

## Human Resources Division

The human resources division provides services that help the department attract and retain a diverse and dynamic workforce, including recruitment and selection; administering salary and fringe benefits programs; overseeing a comprehensive group life, medical, accidental death and dismemberment and dependent life insurance program; maintaining official employee documents and records through a human resources information system; and managing a safety program, including worker's compensation. The division also monitors compli-



LISA ALLEN  
Forestry Division Chief



TOM NEUBAUER  
Human Resources  
Division Chief



MIKE HUFFMAN  
Outreach and Education  
Division Chief

ance with employment practices relating to affirmative action, American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) and drug testing; provides employee training and development programs; administers employee assistance and wellness activities; and assists with disciplinary and grievance processes. A workforce council implements programs to increase the department's efforts to experience the benefits of a diverse workforce.

## Outreach and Education Division

The outreach and education division helps Missourians learn to conserve and enjoy Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources through focused education, interpretation and outreach efforts. The division develops, coordinates and implements education curriculum, materials and programs; public relations, news and marketing; hunter education; print, image and digital media; exhibits; nature and interpretive centers; shooting ranges; hands-on and indirect learning opportunities; and volunteer programs.

The Missouri Conservationist magazine is published monthly and is free to adult Missourians. The magazine has been published since 1938. The monthly circulation is about 500,000. A children's magazine, Xplor, is published every other month. The division coordinates the department webpage information, [www.missouriconservation.org](http://www.missouriconservation.org), which includes an online Conservation Atlas with maps and information about department areas. Other information includes tips for getting outdoors, hunting and fishing reports, conservation videos, the Missouri Conservationist magazine and news online, a calendar of events, links to special programs such as "Grow Native!" and "No MOre Trash!" and the ability to purchase hunting and fishing permits online. Through many free publications, Missourians can also learn about subjects as diverse as how to fish, hunting regulations or animal identification. A Natural Events Calendar, books and DVDs are available at nature centers, through a catalog or online.

There are nature and education centers in Blue Springs, Jefferson City, Kirkwood, Springfield, Cape Girardeau, and Winona and visitor centers in Taney, St. Charles, and St. Louis counties that offer unique nature exploration programs. The Discovery Center, located in the heart of Kansas City, features workshops offering hands-on instruction to school groups and individuals in a building that highlights energy-efficient design.

The division develops and makes available conservation education programs, including "Discover Nature-Schools," which helps students get outside to experience hands-on learning in nature close to home. Instructional units are provided at no cost, that meet testing needs and are combined with grants for field trips and instructional materials to complement the national "No Child Left Inside" effort. Additional units provide focused conservation information for other grade levels. The division delivers conservation education to public, private and parochial schools and colleges, as well as youth leaders and community leaders.

Opportunities for citizen involvement include "Missouri Master Naturalists," which is a community-based, adult natural resource education and volunteer program sponsored by the Department of Conservation, the University of Missouri Extension program, and the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.



The division also teaches Missourians outdoor skills to enjoy the outdoors safely and responsibly. Outdoor skills specialists work to give Missourians of all ages direct experience in nature-based activities such as fishing, hunting and archery. The "Missouri National Archery in the Schools Program (MoNASP)" is supported by the department with the help of the Missouri Conservation Federation to bring archery to schools statewide. Other programs called "Discover Nature-Families" and "Discover Nature-Women" help Missourians learn a variety of skills to enjoy the outdoors. The division coordinates a team of volunteers to provide hunter education training, which is mandatory for all persons born on or after January 1, 1967, as a prerequisite to the purchase of firearms hunting permits. About 28,000 students receive training each year.

Shooting ranges administered by the division provide hunters a safe place to practice and develop outdoor skills. Five staffed shooting range and outdoor education centers, almost 60 unstaffed firearm ranges and 30 archery-only ranges have been created to provide Missourians with opportunities to practice firearm and archery skills. Programs offered at the staffed ranges help educate new hunters.

### Private Land Services Division

The private land services division helps Missouri landowners achieve their land use objectives in ways that enhance fish, forest and wildlife conservation. Private landowners own about 93 percent of the land in Missouri. The division promotes the wise use of fish, forests, wildlife and natural communities through voluntary participation, information, financial assistance and partnerships.

The health of Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources depends on the stewardship of Missouri landowners. The division provides technical assistance and tailors management recommendations to the goals of the landowner and site-specific natural resource needs. Assistance is provided to communities, including urban developers, homeowners, city and county planners and others to address natural resource protection and management in developed areas, as well as in areas under development. Wildlife damage control biologists provide assistance to landowners experiencing damage to their property caused by wildlife including beaver, coyote, otter, Canada geese, deer and others. Wetland biologists provide specialized technical assistance to landowners to restore and manage wetlands. Area biologists work to assist with fish, forest and wildlife aspects of federal farm and conservation programs.

The division develops partnerships with state and federal agencies, commodity groups, agribusinesses, and conservation organizations. Partnerships with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency integrate fish, forest and wildlife considerations into implementation of Farm Bill programs. To complement funding available through federal programs, the department offers cost-share to landowners for implementation of select natural resource management practices.

### Protection Division

The protection division is responsible for enforcement of the Wildlife Code of Missouri and related statutes on both private and public lands. Uniformed Conservation Agents are assigned to each county in Missouri and represent the department in a wide variety of programs.

Agents are licensed as peace officers to enforce all state laws on lands owned, managed or leased by the department. Agents are also commissioned by the U.S. Department of the Interior to enforce federal fish and wildlife laws. Agents administer the hunter education program in their local area. Agents provide conservation information and education through newspaper articles, adult and youth meetings, exhibits, clinics, radio and television programs and other media. The division helps to provide basic information on fish, forest and wildlife management, assists with landowner assistance programs and conducts surveys and special field studies.



MIKE HUBBARD  
Private Land Services  
Division Chief



LARRY YAMNITZ  
Protection Division Chief



MIKE KRUSE  
Resource Science Division  
Chief

Agents are the primary contact for landowners with poaching or trespassing problems and are often contacted about nuisance wildlife issues.

The division works with the Conservation Federation of Missouri to administer the Operation Game Thief, Operation Forest Arson and Share the Harvest programs. "Operation Game Thief" provides an avenue for concerned citizens to report poaching through a centralized toll-free hotline: 1-800-392-1111. Rewards for information leading to the arrest of violators are available. Since the inception of this program in 1982, over 5,400 arrests have been made with information supplied by concerned citizens. This program has been shown to be an effective means of public awareness and involvement in protecting the natural resources of Missouri.

### Resource Science Division

The resource science division provides the science-based information needed to conserve, appreciate and effectively manage the living natural resources of Missouri. The division is organized around systems and functions rather than traditional disciplines and delivers management assistance through a series of field stations. The systems include terrestrial systems, aquatic and wetland systems, science technology and policy support, geographic information systems, environmental health and the Heritage Program. Field stations include a grasslands systems field station in Clinton, a forest systems field station in West Plains, a big rivers and wetlands systems field station in Jackson, an agricultural systems field station in Kirksville and the Missouri River field station in Chillicothe. A Resource Science Center is located in Columbia.

The terrestrial systems work includes evaluating plant and animal habitat relationships, monitoring population status and developing harvest and species management recommendations for statewide populations of deer, furbearers, turkey and migratory birds. Specialized projects monitor wildlife and plant diversity, population changes and forest silviculture.

Aquatic and wetland systems work includes evaluating fisheries, wetland and waterfowl management, fish communities, watersheds, stream systems, interactions among predators and prey and species of concern.

Science technology and policy support work includes post-season harvest hunter and angler surveys, attitude surveys, and public-use surveys to understand the opinions and attitudes of Missourians. This information, combined with biological information and natural resource economics data, informs management decisions. The GIS program uses geospatial technology and products to support natural resource decisions, archive the processes, evaluate results, and train users. Biometricians ensure statistically sound study designs and the use of appropriate statistical techniques to analyze and interpret complex natural resource questions.

Environmental health work includes evaluating aquatic biodiversity, such as mussel conservation and genetics research, water quality and provides responsive service to the department, the public, and other agencies and entities. Issues involving pollution, fish kills, and contaminants are coordinated with other agencies.

The Heritage Program provides expertise for management and research on high priority taxa and maintains the Heritage Database. The Natural Heritage program tracks the status and location of 1,116 species of conservation concern and natural communities, with ongoing documentation and mapping. These data are used in the department and by federal and state agencies for recovery efforts, environmental reviews and management efforts.

### Wildlife Division

The wildlife division is responsible for the management of Missouri's wildlife resources and the landscapes on which wildlife depend. The division manages over 525,000 acres which is about one-half of department lands. The division provides technical advice on resource management to other agencies, organizations, industries and private landowners. The division also provides urban wildlife assistance to communities.

The division administers the department's endangered species, invasive species, natural community management, Natural Areas, Missouri Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative and national Northern Bobwhite Quail Initiative programs. The division develops regulations for the management of wildlife and assists with research and monitoring to adjust regulations and to improve conservation practices and public outdoor recreation opportunities.

Conservation management of public lands provides environmental benefits for all citizens by maintaining the ecological health of our forests, prairies, glades, wetlands and streams. Healthy ecosystems are necessary to produce healthy and sus-



DEECEE DARROW  
Wildlife Division Chief

tainable fish, forest and wildlife resources. They also contribute to high water quality, groundwater recharge, air quality, soil erosion control, and watershed protection.

Public land management by the division includes public recreation opportunities and wildlife benefits. The division maintains 39 public shooting ranges and over 284 miles of trails and administers numerous managed hunts, including special opportunities for youth and disabled hunters. There are also managed hunts for doves, deer, turkey and waterfowl. In Missouri, over 600,000 individuals hunt and 2.2 million view wildlife. These activities have an economic impact in the state of \$3.6 billion.